

Use of U.S. Parcel Post Stamps 1913 – 1926

This year is the centennial of the U.S. Parcel Post System that began January 1, 1913.

Seventeen service specific stamps – twelve carmine rose stamps, values of 1¢ through 5¢, 10¢, 15¢, 20¢, 25¢, 50¢, 75¢ and \$1.00, for Parcel Post, along with five 1¢, 2¢, 5¢, 10¢ and 25¢ dark green Parcel Post Postage Due stamps – had two periods of use. The **restricted use** period from January 1 – until June 30, 1913 and the **unrestricted use** period from July 1, 1913 forward regulated on which class of matter the seventeen stamps could be used.

The approval of Parcel Post was on August 24, 1912 when Congress passed an act to expand the existing fourth-class mail system, in existence since 1879. In 1912 the fourth class rate was one cent per ounce, up to four pounds, regardless of distance sent. Inception was then set for January 1, 1913.

The U. S. Parcel Post System was organized to allow the United States Post Office Department (U.S.P.O.D.) to handle mail matter weighing up to 11 lbs. with size limits. Until then, any packages weighing over four pounds had to be shipped by freight. The classification name of Parcel Post replaced “fourth class” mail; it also expanded the categories of articles mailed through our nation’s postal system.

One cent per ounce to four ounces was retained for any distance but through an intricate organizational system; Parcel Post rates were based on package weight and distance. The Parcel Post System went into effect officially on January 1, 1913 with the 17 stamps becoming valid and was able to handle parcels up to 11 lbs. Rates were assessed by weight and distance grouped into local delivery and eight zones ranging from Zone 1, less than 50 miles, to Zone 8 over 1800 miles.

During the **restricted use** period, all domestic Parcel Post matter was to be prepaid exclusively by the distinctive Parcel Post Stamps. The purpose for the exclusive use of Parcel Post and Parcel Postage Due Stamps was to track revenue generated.

Public Copy of
Pending Senate
Bill sent by U.S.
Senator Jonathan
Bourne from
Oregon, to a U.S.
citizen group.
When later
passed on
August 24, 1912
this bill became
the Federal Act
creating the
Parcel Post
System starting
January 1, 1913.

Unrestricted stamp use began on July 1, 1913 when the original regulations were rescinded, all regular postage and postage due stamps were permitted for use on Parcel Post matter. Parcel Post and Parcel Post Due Stamps likewise were valid on all classes of mail becoming interchangeable with ordinary postage due stamps. The production of the 17 stamps was discontinued, but use was continued to use up all remaining supplies. The U.S.P.O.D. knew that the Parcel Post System was a success, revenue was up and they no longer needed exclusive service specific stamps to prove it. By 1926, Post Offices had used up the majority of the stamps.

Exhibit Overview

The goal of this exhibit is to show the use of 17 values of the Parcel Post and Parcel Post Due Stamps. Examples selected are emphasizing scarcer tied or dated use throughout the exhibit. Multiple examples of all 17 values are shown including first day of restricted use and first day of unrestricted use. Origin and destination distribution of the items include the six continents of recorded use and at sea.

Outline of the Exhibit

- **Restricted Use Period, January – June 1913**
 - 1 to 4 oz unlimited distance use
 - Regulations, Unit Guide and sizing limit tape
 - Pound and Zone distance use
 - U.S.P.O.D. Official Parcel Post Unit Map
- **Unrestricted Use Period, after June 30, 1913**
 - First Class Letters, Domestic
 - First Class Letters, Foreign
 - Domestic Territories, Possessions and Postal Agencies
 - Second Class Use
 - Third Class Use
 - Parcel Post
 - Indemnity/C.O.D. for Parcel Post Matter
 - Incoming Parcel Post, Foreign Fee
 - Effect of Parcel Post

Exceptional and Challenging Items are denoted by: 

